



**Belltown Community Center
Public Meeting
August 24, 2005**

Meeting Notes

Presenters:

Toby Ressler, Seattle Parks Department Project Manager, and the Project Advisory Team members: Greg Waddell, Carolyn Geise, Zander Batchelder, Bea Kumasaka, Janis Ford, and Barbara Sheldon.

Toby Ressler introduced himself, and the members of the Project Advisory Team (PAT)

Toby presented to all participants a review of the situation as it currently stands.

LIHI site: The Project Advisory Team (PAT) is waiting to hear the final determination on the Low Income Housing Institute's (LIHI) site at 2407 First Avenue, the site the PAT originally selected as its preferred location. However, after more than two years of hard work by LIHI in trying to secure the funding to build on that site, the group is now reevaluating potential sites for the new community center.

Alternative sites: Sites discussed at this meeting were the Masters/Mates building, located along Third Avenue (which is only available for lease), the Regrade Park, and the former Speakeasy (which may or may not be available, but will be determined in early September). The former Speakeasy is at Second and Bell.

Comments about site alternatives:

Greg Waddell mentioned the SHA site, located on First Avenue, saying that the PAT isn't seriously considering it. The SHA building, beyond lacking attractiveness, is located close to night clubs -- a concern. Greg stated that by the end of November, 2005, the group should know if the LIHI funding arrangement has been approved for the original site. Toby Ressler, on behalf of the Parks department, promised to take no action until news of the LIHI deal is known in late 2005.

Next, the discussion turned to the possibility of teaming with either the Millionair Club or with the Sculpture Park, in terms of locations. The pros and cons of those two sites were discussed.

Participants discussed elements the Center should have:

1. An outdoor component is very desirable, e.g. a nearby park or green space.
2. A "specialness" to the building would be desired.

3. A PAT member said that in early planning, choosing a site in a level area for ease of mobility (ADA access) was very important. How important is that factor? This means locating the Center east of First Avenue.

Accessibility of the Center's location would be an issue, with either the Millionair Club or Sculpture Park alternative locations.

On the other hand, the Sculpture Park would fulfill the hoped-for element of "specialness". However this location has restricted evening hours, and the location is not central to Belltown.

- There was a great deal of debate about the accessibility and other elements of both sites.

An additional site was suggested as a possible location to look into: the Plymouth Building in the 2100 block of Third Avenue, near Regrade Park. It is next to Brasa, and is looking for commercial tenants.

Next Steps:

Toby will look into the possibilities of the Speakeasy, Millionair Club, and Sculpture Park locations further. He will also find out more about the Plymouth Building, and will bring this information to the next PAT meeting for discussion.

The group requested a review of the Site Evaluation Criteria used in early planning. (See Pages 3 and 4 of this document.)

These notes are posted on the project web page:

http://www.cityofseattle.net/parks/centers/current/Belltown_Neighborhood_Center.htm

Location within Neighborhood

Among the many criteria used in evaluating potential sites, their location in relationship to existing and future housing is among the most important. While housing is distributed throughout Belltown, maps prepared by Neighborhood Center planners show that there is a higher concentration of existing and proposed housing in the portion of the neighborhood between Bell Street and Broad Street. **(Figure 1) (attached)**

Street access – Ground level, second level or multiple levels

It is important that the Neighborhood Center have a “street presence” from the standpoint of being visible and presenting an open, welcoming gesture to the community. However, some uses may appropriately be located on upper or lower levels and this separation may serve as a method of separating “wet” and “dry” uses, or uses that may be less compatible due to noise levels. ADA accessibility within the building is essential regardless of number of levels.

Public transit access

Transit is available on most streets and avenues in Belltown, with varying degrees of frequency and convenience. It should be feasible to locate the Neighborhood Center within one block of a transit stop. However, this would not guarantee direct access to that particular transit stop from all points in the neighborhood.

Parking availability

In terms of Land Use Code, Belltown is governed by Downtown Zoning chapters. For calculating parking requirements, Belltown is in an “area with Moderate Transit Access.” For the purposes of determining parking requirements, nonresidential public projects shall be determined on a case-by-case basis. Using the parking standards of non-public/nonresidential uses in downtown, a 6000 square foot community center would be required to have one (1) unrestricted, long-term parking space.

Due the neighborhood’s density, pedestrian character, and transit accessibility, availability of off-street parking should not be considered priority criteria for site selection for the neighborhood center. However, ease of drop-off and pick-up should be considered an important criteria.

ADA accessibility

The facility will meet ADA code requirements. However, another criteria to be considered in choosing a site should be general ease of access from the surrounding community. From this standpoint, sites west of First Avenue are less desirable due to slope.

Access to recreation / green space

Access to existing recreation / green space is not a priority criteria, due much to the fact that very little such space exists in Belltown. Adjacency to Regrade Park would serve two advantages: first, it would create a “presence” at or near the Park that may inhibit undesirable

activities; secondly, it would provide outdoor space that could be programmed as part of the Neighborhood Center. The use of one of more of the cottages adjacent the Belltown P-Patch for some of the programmed activities of the Neighborhood Center is desirable.

Ownership versus lease

Ownership of the facility would imply more permanence than a lease. Even if City funding for operation of the Belltown Neighborhood Center were not available in the future, a non-profit community association could lease and operate a publicly owned facility. There are a number of precedents for this in the City.

Co-location / co-development

- Service agencies
- Non-profit housing
- Condominium and market rate housing
- Offices and/or retail
- Other organizations (i.e. unions)

Timing of co-location opportunity versus neighborhood center schedule

Facility Characteristics

- ` Amount of space
- ` Quality of space
- ` Appropriateness of space for desired uses
- ` Need and cost for additional improvements
- ` Appropriateness or compatibility of co-tenants
- ` Architectural quality of building / space
- ` Natural light versus artificial light